

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH LIEUTENANT GENERAL MICHAEL ROCHELLE, DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR PERSONNEL (G1); MAJOR GENERAL GINA FARRISEE, DIRECTOR, MILITARY PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT; AND COLONEL LARRY LOCKE, DIRECTOR OF COMPENSATION AND ENTITLEMENT; VIA TELECONFERENCE TIME: 4:00 P.M. EDT DATE: WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2009

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LIEUTENANT COLONEL GEORGE WRIGHT (Army Public Affairs): Good afternoon, callers. I'm Lieutenant Colonel George Wright with Army Public Affairs, your moderator for the event today. We're going to be discussing stop-loss and some of the policy changes that were announced by the Secretary of Defense today.

On our panel we've got Lieutenant General Rochelle, first name Michael. He's the deputy chief of staff for Personnel, also referred to as the G1. Major General Gina, with a G, Farrisee, F-A-R-R-I-S-E-E, is the director of Military Personnel Management. And Colonel Larry Locke, standard spelling, is the director of Compensation and Entitlement. They'll be discussing, as I said, stop-loss and the policies that we're moving toward. This is an on-the-record event. We'll be taking initial questions from those in the room and then we'll move to the phone and back, and then we'll have summary afterwards. The news release will be posted shortly on www.army.mil.

So I'd like to introduce now General Rochelle. Please, sir.

LT. COL. ROCHELLE: Well, good afternoon, everyone. Thanks for joining us and thanks for the opportunity. I won't repeat the two distinguished members of the panel I have here with me, but I would like to just say thanks to General Farrisee for her hard work on this, very, very hard work, and her team, and Colonel Larry Locke, compensation chief, worked very diligently on this matter as well.

As you know, the Secretary of Defense has announced today our phased plan to begin coming off stop-loss later this year. Stop-loss has been a vital tool that has allowed the Army to sustain cohesive operational forces that train and serve together through their deployment. It's been important to our success during this time of extended and continuous combat operations, and conditions like the president's recent announcement of troop withdrawals from Iraq, a gradual restoration of balance between deployments, and an increase in the size of the Army have now given us the opportunity and allowed us to begin to reduce stop-loss.

This is great news for the Army family and our soldiers who have sacrificed for their country and served so well for an extended period of time.

Limiting stop-loss balances our need for unit effectiveness with the impact on individual soldiers and their families.

Under our plan the total Army will gradually reduce the number of those affected by the program, by stop-loss, that is. The Army Reserve will begin mobilizing units without stop-loss in August, 2009, followed by Army National Guard in September 2009. The active Army will begin deploying units without the use of stop-loss, beginning in January 2010.

There are approximately 13,000 soldiers impacted by stop-loss across all three components of the Army. In the active Army that number is 7,307, 4,458 for the Army National Guard, and 1,452 for the Army Reserve.

Also today we are implementing a new recent congressionally authorized payment for stop-loss soldiers. As part of our announcement today, soldiers affected by stop-loss will begin receiving \$500 per month, and the Army has coordinated with Defense Finance and Accounting Service to effect that payment for soldiers currently in stop-loss beginning in March 2009 pay, which by point of clarification is paid on the 1st of April 2009. We are pleased to make this special pay available to our soldiers and their families. By way of an editorial comment, it's clear that stop-loss has caused hardship on soldiers and families. When I say we're pleased to make this special pay available to them, I should acknowledge that the Congress has helped us with that of course, but we are indeed pleased because we know that that hardship is real.

And now I'd be delighted to take your questions, along with my two compadres.

LT. COL. WRIGHT: Thank you, General. We'll let Tom Shecker (ph) from The New York Times pose the first question.

Q (Off mike.) We've heard about the sustained stress on them. So how do you know now what the timetable is for stop-loss? Are there any other -- (off mike) -- in this policy beyond just general -- (off mike)?

GEN. ROCHELLE: Excellent question, Tom, and thank you for participating. I mean that sincerely. Several things.

First of all, there is risk associated with this plan, unquestionably. But there are a couple of things that allow us to mitigate that risk, not the least of which is the projected reduction of forces in Iraq. Also, the Army has now achieved its end strength growth to its 547.4K end strength three years ahead of schedule. We were on track and projected to achieve that growth by 2012. We are there now.

The third and final point that helps us mitigate it is the enterprise-wide approach that will allow us to synchronize far better than we have ever done in the past both accessions, individual training, individual leader development training -- everything from our basic noncommissioned officer course all the way through the sergeants major academy, the War College, and the like -- better with Army force generation. So there is reasonableness. And as the chief would say, these things have come together to create an opportunity that we are now going to seize.

LT. COL. WRIGHT: Let's go to the phones. Pauline Jelineck from the AP, and then we'll go to Michelle Tan next.

Q Yes. Could you just clarify for us, overall since 2001 how many people have been stop-lossed? And a little bit on -- is it correct that anyone who is supposed to have been retired 90 days previous to their unit's deployment? Those two things. The total figure and kind of the rule on stop-loss. Thank you.

GEN. ROCHELLE: If I may call you Pauline --

Q Please.

GEN. ROCHELLE: We'll have to get the figure. In fact, I have testified before the House Appropriations Committee this morning and the committee asked me that same question, how many soldiers have been in stop-loss since the beginning of the war on terror. I didn't have that number for them at that point and I'm afraid I don't have that number now, but we will get it for you before the end of the day.

To your second and third questions.

Individuals who are currently on stop-loss, who are currently deployed or in a stop-loss condition, we have worked very diligently with Defense Finance and Accounting Services to pre-load and have their specific data already at DFAS yesterday in anticipation of the announcement today, which is why we can be certain that payment for those individuals who are currently on active duty -- that includes our Reserves who are mobilized and are stop-lossed -- will be in the 1 April pay.

The law allows -- and this is a fairly recent legal interpretation, I might add -- the law allows that we can now go back and pay individuals as far back as the 1st of October 2008, not earlier than that. No one who was stop-lossed prior to 1 October 2008, based upon the statute that was passed, is entitled to this compensation. Anyone on October and subsequently is entitled, and we are preparing to make those payments, given this very recent legal interpretation, like a week, last week to -- inside the last 10 days. That payment will be made on the 1st of May, latest for some small number of them that I can anticipate will have complications associated with them, in June.

Did that answer your question?

Q Thank you, General, yes.

LT. COL. WRIGHT: John Gray, stand by. You'll be after Michelle Tan from Army Times.

Q Just to clarify on those retroactive cases, sir, are we looking at lump-sum payments for these folks who may no longer be on --

GEN. ROCHELLE: Larry, let me ask you, the expert on entitlements, to talk about that. And you might also add the tax question as well.

COL. LOCKE: There will be a one-time lump sum dating back, as the general indicated, back to October 1st, 2008. With respect to the taxability of those pays, if a soldier earned the pay while they were deployed, it would be non-taxable earnings. However, anything earned outside of the (comeback ?) zone would be taxable pay. Q The retroactive pay, that would be taxable?

COL. LOCKE: It depends again, ma'am, on where they were when they earned their pay.

Q Got you. And how much is the Army budgeting for this special pay?

GEN. ROCHELLE: Well, let me address that because quite fortunately the Congress has provided the Army \$72 million to cover the costs in fiscal '09, and I just this morning in conversation with the chairman of the House Appropriations -- Defense Subcommittee of the House Appropriations -- received some assurances that we can expect additional support from the Congress going forward.

Q Just a follow-up, if I may. You mentioned some of the risks associated with this, sir. Can you elaborate?

GEN. ROCHELLE: Of course. The most significant risk, of course, would be that we would have a demand for forces beyond that which we currently anticipate. That's the number one. And since none of us are completely clairvoyant, we have to balance that and mitigate that risk.

I would reiterate what the secretary of defense said in his press conference earlier this afternoon, and that is that the statutes, 10 United States Code, continues to authorize the use of stop-loss under emergency conditions. This policy change within the Army and within Department of Defense does not change that.

LT. COL. WRIGHT: Ann, you'll follow John Gray from AUSA. John, go ahead, please.

Q A two-part question. Did stop-loss apply to units who were deploying to Kuwait, and also Guard and Reserve units who may have been deploying to Europe?

GEN. ROCHELLE: I'm not aware of stop-loss applying to any units deploying to Europe. General Farrisee?

GEN. FARRISEE: Yes, sir. To Kuwait is correct, and to Iraq and Afghanistan. Not to Europe.

Q Thank you very much.

LT. COL. WRIGHT: That's it, John?

Q Yes, that's it. Michelle asked my questions.

LT. COL. WRIGHT: Okay, good deal. Matt, you'll follow Ann Scott-Tyson from The Washington Post. Go ahead, Ann. Q One question I had was, I understood that someone who -- that a lot of people were stop-lossed because the entire unit was stop-lossed and it was 90 days before and after, correct? So how will that -- I mean, practically speaking, how are you going to stop doing that? And how will those units have the adequate people that they need, with the skill sets that they need, with what could be quite a bit of higher turnover? How will the Army make sure the units have who they need without using stop-loss?

GEN. ROCHELLE: Well, Ann, first of all, you put your finger on the reason why there are staggered periods for the various components, and I'll take the Reserve component example first and then work my way to the active component. The scope of the challenge for the National Guard and the Army Reserve pales by comparison to the scope of the challenge for the active component in sheer volume. But in each case they are able to, with the offering of incentives, the details for which will come out a little bit later, and these are incentives. And I want to differentiate between the \$500 compensation from incentives that we will offer individuals to extend their enlistment in order to complete the deployment. And those who are not willing to do that, some will deploy, some will not. Suffice it to say that's the way in which we will operate this.

But to your specific question, the reason for the start date of January 2010 for the active component is to allow us to position ourselves optimally to be able to start on that date, minimizing the impacts on individuals who would have to be stop-lossed. Some will remain, continue to be stop-lossed as we begin to work our way off of it. But also put our incentives in place to draw down the numbers who are involuntarily stop-lossed.

Q Okay, so can you tell anything about what those incentives will involve? I mean, what would those incentives be, any types of --

GEN. ROCHELLE: Well, I really don't want to get into the nitty-gritty details of that right now unless General Farrisee wants to talk about that.

GEN. FARRISEE: I think it would be safe to say that they will be monetary incentives, that the policy has not been written yet as to what the incentives will be.

Q Well, what is your expectation then in terms of -- I mean, are people -- you know, how much stop-loss, the need for keeping people in will be eliminated? I mean, like for example, I can imagine every unit and, okay, we know we're going to need this kind of specially skilled people. Can we get them, can we get them from elsewhere, make sure they're all there so those people who are going to be leaving don't have to leave. And then, you know, make some -- I'm trying to get a sense for --

GEN. FARRISEE: I'll give you a little bit of clarity. The first thing, to go back to what General Rochelle said. We are setting those units now. Those units that will start deploying in January-February, the reason we asked to not start that elimination, reduction in stop-loss was to give us time to set those units. We actually now begin setting these one year out prior to them actually deploying. So that is very important to have that time to be able to set the unit as best we can.

And then of course we would offer incentives for people to extend through the deployment. We currently do not offer extensions. They re-enlist and re-enlist only. We will now offer an incentive to extend through the deployment, and so we hope that that would help to continue to fill the unit as needed.

Q So they get the extension monetary incentive, plus -- they wouldn't be on stop-loss then.

GEN. FARRISEE: Correct. They would not be on stop-loss.

GEN. ROCHELLE: That's correct. And let's not diminish the significance of the reduction in demand, anticipated as a result of the drawdown in Iraq. That's a very key point. You know, people ask, why now. As I have said on the record, both on Capitol Hill and in the media, we would be off stop-loss tomorrow were it not for the demand for Army forces worldwide, not just Iraq and Afghanistan. Worldwide. So the anticipated reduction in demand recently announced by President Obama is a major factor.

LT. COL. WRIGHT: Matt, after your question we'll come back here to Jeff. But go ahead, Matt, from Blackfive.

Q Thank you. This is Matt from Blackfive.

And one of the questions I had, General, was, how did we arrive at \$500? Was that just based on the amount of money we had and the amount of stop-loss that we're predicting, or was there some other reason for that amount?

GEN. ROCHELLE: No, sir, it was the intent of the Appropriations Committee staff and the chairman of the Appropriations Committee that the amount be set at \$500 per month.

Q And that was just because that's what they thought was reasonable?

GEN. ROCHELLE: That was what they set it at.

LT. COL. WRIGHT: Thanks, Matt. We'll follow up Jeff's questions with those from John and Brendan after Jeff Schogol from Stars and Stripes.

Q This may be a question for the Colonel. If I understand you right, for the portion of the \$500 that was earned outside the combat zone, that is taxable. If you get subsequently deployed, that portion is not taxable. So if you were stop-lossed in the United States and subsequently went downrange, a portion of your lump sum will be taxable and another portion --

COL. LOCKE: That is correct. Like any pay that soldiers earned while in a combat zone, that's tax-excluded, so anything they earn outside of that -- I mean, one of the keys with respect to pay and entitlements, generally when we have pay associated with a compensation, generally speaking it's taxable income. Base pay, special pay, it's generally taxed. But while soldiers are in combat zone, those are generally excluded.

Q And General Rochelle, did you say some soldiers may not get this until May or June?

GEN. ROCHELLE: That's correct, and those are soldiers whose eligibility predates this month, predates the month of March. The recent ruling by DOD general counsel allows us to go back to the 1st of October. That's what we recently in the last seven days or so learned. So we were not prepared, and have not prepared, to execute that portion that goes back prior to March pay. And we will do that in April -- excuse me, May and June.

Q How many soldiers are we talking about?

GEN. ROCHELLE: I can't answer that.

Q And in layman's terms --

GEN. ROCHELLE: Frankly because these are individuals, some of whom have separated, but it's an amorphous number right now. But in the next several days we can get our arms around that pretty accurately.

Q And what does it mean -- I'm sorry, this is going to sound like an obvious question because it is. When you say that they predate the March, what does that mean?

GEN. ROCHELLE: What that means is, these are soldiers who were on either -- some of them may have been in a stop-loss condition on the 1st of October 2008 and remain in a stop-loss condition to this very day. But because of the lack of clarity on our ability to pay prior to the effective date of the program, we have not provided those names and that information their prior eligibility to DFAS.

Q Prior to March --

GEN. ROCHELLE: Prior to March, that's correct.

Q I'm sorry to press this --

GEN. ROCHELLE: I want you to press it because I want it to be clear.
Q I thought that if you'd been on stop-loss since October 1, you can expect a lump sum going back to October 1.

GEN. ROCHELLE: You can.

Q But it sounds like you're saying that if you were on stop loss prior to March 1 that you have --

GEN. ROCHELLE: Thank you. Let me make it painfully clear. For the month of March you can expect that on the 1st of April. Anything prior to March, you will expect that in May or June in a lump sum.

Q Got it.

LT. COL. WRIGHT: Thanks, Chuck. Let's go to the phone.

John Donovan, please.

Q Sure. Looking ahead to unintended consequences, which always trip us up. You made the comment earlier in response to a previous question that ARFORGEN and improved management practices within the Army are going to allow us to beat the manning goals. I was just wondering, the impact on that in terms of people getting quicker back-to-back deployments as while they still have active enlistments, they just came back, which post-deployment stabilization issues, and then okay, we've stopped stop-loss. That's great. It was a blunt tool for a surgical problem. What about is that going to potentially spill over to an increase in IRR call-ups, something similar?

GEN. ROCHELLE: Excellent question, John. I don't think so. I don't anticipate that because your question presumes -- or maybe excludes is a better way to say it -- the anticipated impacts of the drawdown. Bearing in mind that the active component does not begin deploying units until January 2010.

Second point in your question. I also don't anticipate that it will mean shorter dwell time, which is what you were implying, simply because what we will be able to do is set those units. And the unknown variable right now is what General Farrisee spoke to, which is the effects, which we have tried to model but have been unsuccessful. The anticipated effects of the voluntary extension, it's just human behavior. And our smartest, smartest modelers have cracked their knuckles on this one and simply come back and said, this is going to be human behavior, General Rochelle. We don't know how it's going to play out. But we think it's going to play out very, very well for us.

Q I understand. You have to make assumptions. I just thought we'd bring up the IRR piece.

GEN. ROCHELLE: Good point. LT. COL. WRIGHT: Hello, John --

GEN. ROCHELLE: John, I guess the bottom line is I don't anticipate a heavier reliance on the IRR than we currently have.

Q Thank you, sir.

LT. COL. WRIGHT: Brendan Friedman from bedboys.com (ph), please.

Q Thanks. This kind of actually leads into the question I was going to ask about the IRR.

One, I guess, you said it's not going to cause more IRR recalls, but could this possibly lower IRR recalls? And more importantly my question is, what about soldiers who are involuntarily recalled off the IRR in a year of their MSO, and then stop-loss? Are they still going to be stop-lossed or not?

GEN. ROCHELLE: Your first question was, could this possibly mean a lower reliance on IRR. I wouldn't assume that. I would assume a relatively constant reliance on the IRR as a going imposition. I'm unaware of any circumstances in which we bring an individual onto -- an individual to active duty under the presidential selective reserve call-up authority, and that individual goes into a stop-loss position. Maybe I'm missing something here.

Q Okay, I have seen copies of orders of soldiers who are being recalled off the IRR within 90 or 100 days of their eight-year MSO, and when they get recalled, when they go on active duty they're stop-lossed for the duration of their deployment. So if you're not aware of that, I can get you some follow-up information.

GEN. ROCHELLE: I'd appreciate some follow-up on it. I'll do some research on that.

Q Okay, but anyway, back -- I guess the answer is we don't know if this is going to affect that.

GEN. ROCHELLE: I understood the example you just gave. Let me just let General Farrisee make a comment.

GEN. FARRISEE: It would definitely affect that. We would not be stop-lossing those people that you were referring to.

Q All right.

LT. COL. WRIGHT: We've got a couple of follow-up questions in the room. But before we get to them, let's give Kate (sp) and Julian a chance first. Kate (sp), from Inside the Army. Kate (sp), are you there? (No response.)

Julian Barnes, L.A. Times.

Q Do you have monthly numbers? Secretary Gates said that the numbers had stayed high since the end of the surge. Do you have monthly numbers about precisely what it's been since the end of the surge?

GEN. ROCHELLE: We have monthly numbers that will cause your eyes to water, and levels of --

COL. LOCKE: Julian, we can send those to you.

Q Okay, great. I'll wait for those later, then.

GEN. FARRISEE: If I might also add to that, the surge has not ended. The units that were involved in the surge do not all return until September of '09. So some of them, their numbers are still high based on that all the surge units have not returned yet.

COL. LOCKE: An excellent point.

Q Let me ask one more question too, if I may. I mean, I know that this story today is about the stop-loss ending or coming to an end. But I was wondering if -- I know we all heard this before, but for my readers I think it would be important just to have a simple statement about why it was necessary for the first six years of the war, what advantage it gave to the Army.

GEN. ROCHELLE: Well, the advantage is exactly the one that the secretary cited in his press conference, and that is the ability to deploy cohesive units that train together, remain together, deploy together, fight together, and re-deploy together. And that's still an important factor to us. If it were not, we wouldn't be offering the incentives, the extension incentives that General Farrisee spoke about to offset the impacts, the potential impacts of starting now, even with the anticipated reduction in demand for Army forces.

The major advantage is stability, cohesiveness, and the added combat power that that provides an Army unit.

Q Thank you.

LT. COL. WRIGHT: Michelle, you had a follow-up question?

Q Yes, I do. Actually a couple of detailed questions, if I could. You had said you don't really have a number you could give us of how many people from October 1 through now might be getting this payment? GEN. ROCHELLE: No. In fact, I'll defer. Let me just comment first of all. We didn't run those numbers because until just a few days ago we were under another lawyer's opinion, by the way, that we could not go back and pay retroactively. So our focus was on who is in the window of opportunity here to compensate in March. But we can have that in a matter of -- I'll turn to you, Larry.

COL. LOCKE: I would say within a day or so probably.

GEN. ROCHELLE: I was going to say 48 hours.

Q And do you have a number for, an average of how many months these soldiers are on stop-loss? Are you looking at, you know, anywhere from three to six months? What's the average time soldiers are on stop-loss?

GEN. ROCHELLE: We do. Do you want to tackle that one?

GEN. FARRISEE: Prior to the surge it was about five months, but it really went up to about eight months once we had surge units go in, which we had at that time. So I would say five to eight months.

Q And then just a couple of quick ones. I'm sorry, but you mentioned as part of the incentives, you're still working on what might that be. But that would be to extend just through the tour is an option.

GEN. FARRISEE: That will be an option.

Q And then what happens now, Congress still has to approve this plan? Or can you go ahead and implement it?

GEN. ROCHELLE: The technical trigger was a requirement for the secretary of defense to notify Congress of the details of the plan and implementation. And it's my belief that with his announcement today, that notification requirement was satisfied.

Q No need to go back to the committee or anything?

GEN. ROCHELLE: That's my understanding.

Q Thank you.

LT. COL. WRIGHT: Thank you, Michelle.

Ann, to follow?

Q Yes, just on a basic point. I still want to make sure I understand exactly what has changed. The Army will not deploy these units, but the stop-loss authority continues. I mean, it's intact.

Nothing's really changed about that. But what I'm wondering is, does this just mean that for right now they're saying we are not going to mobilize whole units to do this, but should an emergency arise you're going to go back and do it. There's nothing about this that's saying you cannot in the future -- I mean, do you understand what I'm trying to say? There was this policy of doing the entire unit. Does that mean you're saying we can't do that any more?

GEN. ROCHELLE: That's a very good question, and let me address that. We will still mobilize the best trained, the best equipped, and the best led units that the world has ever seen, and we will continue to do that without stop-loss. We will offer individuals inside those units who have separation dates that occur during the course of either the mobilization and/or -- let me back up here. Not the mobilization. The deployment and the re-deployment. We will offer them an incentive to remain with the unit.

There is an incentive that's unique to the Army Reserve, an incentive that's unique to the National Guard, and there will be an incentive that's

unique to the active component because each component has a different challenge they're attempting to address. Some of those individuals will not deploy. They will not be placed into a stop-loss condition. Others will volunteer, do an extension to deploy with the unit.

Our obligation to our soldiers, to our units, and to their families remains constant. The best trained, the best equipped, and the best led. And that includes stability, as much as we can protect it.

Q My question is more about what exactly -- I mean, has anything changed about the wording of the regulation or policy that actually authorizes stop-loss? In other words, this is just how you are choosing at this time to implement stop-loss, but it's not taking away any authority to do this in any sort of permanent --

GEN. ROCHELLE: I thought I made that clear earlier, but I'll be happy to repeat it. The authority for stop-loss comes from Title 10 United States Code. There has been no change to the authority to employ stop-loss. We're choosing to come off it.

Q So in the case of an emergency, then, could you give us a little bit more clarity on -- because the defense secretary did say this would be used for only a score of people, scores of people rather than thousands, and that its use would be somehow minimized. So it's really unclear how you would define an emergency circumstance.

GEN. ROCHELLE: And I think he wisely left that vague, because we don't know. But he also said that would be up to the secretary of the Army.

Q And just one quick question on the extension. These extensions would just be offered for intel -- what, 90 days after deployment, or just until they come home?

GEN. FARRISEE: They would be offered until 60 days after they come back.

LT. COL. WRIGHT: Are there any follow-ups on the phone?

Q One question from John Grady. Does this not create more cross-leveling and affect the cohesion that you were talking about earlier, General Rochelle?

GEN. ROCHELLE: There may be in some of our reserve components a slight uptick in the requirement for cross-leveling. Slight, not a significant. But with the ability to set the unit earlier, the objective once again is to have the unit train together, mobilize, then deploy. That will not be the case -- your assumption would not be the case in the active component.

LT. COL. WRIGHT: Any other follow-ups on the phone?

Q Hi, this is Tom Vanden Brook with USA Today.

LT. COL. WRIGHT: Yes, Tom, thanks for joining.

Q Sorry I'm late. I just had a question for General Rochelle, if I could. Sir, could you tell us what sorts of specialties, military specialties

are primarily affected by stop-loss, and what ranks primarily have been affected by this?

GEN. ROCHELLE: Well, the typical rank is E-4, E-5. I think it's 45 percent are E-4 and 55 percent are the grade of E-5 and above. Specialties, the majority specialty is infantry, and beyond the infantry narrow MOS, military occupational specialty, the majority is combat arms.

General Farrisee, anything to add to that?

GEN. FARRISEE: The combat arms is followed closely by our logistics MOSs.

Q Thank you.

LT. COL. WRIGHT: Any others? Last call in the room? Q General, you said earlier when you were talking about folks that their DOS might fall in the mobilization versus falling within the actual deployment. Are folks who have a date of separation that falls within that 90-day window who the unit gets notified before they deploy, their DOS falls -- are they stop-lossed? Or only are they stop-lossed if their date of separation falls on the actual --

GEN. FARRISEE: Today they are stop-lossed. In fact, we call it LAD minus 90. Yes, they are stop-lossed, but that will no longer be the case as we move into the mobilization for September for the Reserve and Guard and then January for the active force. That is the current --

GEN. ROCHELLE: The only thing I would add to the new approach is that they will be offered an opportunity to extend through the -- which is not the case today.

Q Units right now, though, are deploying for -- no more 18 months, but 12 months, then?

GEN. ROCHELLE: That's correct.

Q The soldier could essentially find out his unit has been called up, they get a notification, it's falling in 90 days, and he realizes that he's got -- I've got a week left, and at that point he realizes, no, I'm going to essentially be in the Army for a year and a half maybe additionally?

GEN. ROCHELLE: Well, first of all, no Reserve unit is receiving that short a notification. Not today. The notification of sourcing, as it's commonly referred to, ideally occurs 12 months out now. So no one would receive that short a notice.

LT. COL. WRIGHT: Yes, Jeff?

Q The Congress authorized this as of October 1. Can you talk about why it's taken a few months to get this policy nailed down?

GEN. ROCHELLE: Happily. This is complex. That's the bottom line. This is very complex, and so it was incumbent upon us to make sure that we did our level best to identify second- and potential third-order effects of any application of policy to eliminate stop-loss that we might conceive of. And so we drilled it with lots of help from the committee staff, the House Appropriations Committee staff, help from the Armed Services Committee staff,

OSD, and of course internal to the Army, to make sure that we knew the potential second- and third-order effects of every small detail that we were considering. Effects on the soldiers, effects on readiness, effects on the next to deploy, and effects on families.

I'll simply conclude by saying once again, it is complex. LT. COL. WRIGHT: Any closing comments?

GEN. ROCHELLE: Well, first of all I'd like to thank all of you for the time and attention to this matter, and to help us get the word out to our soldiers, to our family members, to whom we all owe a tremendous debt of gratitude. As I said in my opening statement, we know that this has been a hardship, stop-loss, that is, on Army families. Unfortunately it was a necessary hardship, and we now have a window of opportunity, primarily granted us by President Obama announced reductions in Iraq. Also mitigated by our enterprise level approach to human resource management and the synchronization of all of our very complex assignment policies and procedures.

We now have an opportunity to take that burden off the backs of our soldiers and families, and so we are striking now while that iron is very, very hot. And it's also fortunate that we have the ability, thanks to the Congress, to compensate those soldiers for their hardship, where it remains going forward.

I'd just simply conclude by reiterating, August for the Army Reserve, September for the Army National Guard to begin, and January 2010 for the active component, active Army

I thank you once again, everyone.

LT. COL. WRIGHT: General, thank you very much. Once again, look at the news release on www.army.mil, and feel free to call either Lindy Kyzer or myself.

END.